A Radio Luxembourg 'Power Play'

Here comes another hit from

The Dave Clark Five

Here Comes Summer

c/w Break down and cry

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PERFORMANCE

Sing A Rude Song

OF THE spate of new musicals that have hit the West End recently, 'Sing A Rude Song' (Garrick) can be considered one of the better shows. Based on the career and flamboyance of the Edwardian music hall queen Marie Lloyd, the production carries a cheeky warmth and sparkle that against the backdrop of Ron Grainer's cheerful score would have done the lady herself proud.

Authors and lyricists Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin have witten the story mainly round the years 1907 to 1912 when at the height of her fame, Marie abandoned her golden-hearted husband Alec in favour of drunken Irish jockey Bernard Dillon. The plot ends rather in mid-air after Dillon has deserted her and she has a reject's reunion with the faithful Alec.

Zest and exuberance, however, come as much as anywhere throughout the evening from a bubbling performance as Marie by little Barbara Windsor. With a voice no more than a hoarse croak, the Cockney actress is an ideal vehicle for such gusty items as 'Whoops Cockie', 'My Old Man', 'Haven't the Words', and many others.

Backing her up is Dennis Quilley who gives a thoroughly professional performance as Alec while Bee Gee Maurice Gibb makes a somewhat shaky West End debut as Dillon.

There is also a splendid evocation of Edwardian atmosphere in an excellent set designed by Roger Butlin and the whole show moves at a brisk and pertinent pace thanks to Robin Phillips' direction. The musical is presented by Robert Stigwood in association with Bob Swash and Polydor is releasing the original soundtrack album (238 3018) this week.

RICHARD ROBSON

Elton John

DIRECTOR STANLEY DORFMAN chided his invitation-only audience for its feeble applause during the sound-level testing which always preceeds this type of TV production.

"You can do better than that, and I guarantee you will be enthusiastic about this artist", Dorfman dryly commented.

He was talking about Elton John, who recently taped a programme at the BBC's Television Centre for a colour series Dorfman is preparing on current popular composers to be telecast on BBC 2 in the autumn.

Elton John, with two albums on the DJM label under his belt, and a third to be released in July, just keeps getting better and better. When introduced to members of the music press, he was accepted with unequivocal acclaim; word of his phenomenal musical gifts has spread out to all sectors of the music public.

For such is the composing talent of John – coupled with the incisive lyrics of Bernie Taupin – that he appeals to people of all generations. His music stands firm, assured of itself and insusceptible to musical games of applying categories or spotting influences.

Credit too must go to arranger Paul Buckmaster, of whom observers are also beginning to take note. His work can be found on John's second album and on the new Harvest release by Quatermass.

A cellist as well as arranger, Buckmaster has a very special ability in the application of strings, brass and reeds to the basic and direct simplicity of John's pianistics without obtrusion. His work with cello in the introduction of 'The Great Discovery' sets the awed tone of the work with a profound grace.

Although John is quite at home in the finely balanced structures of Buckmaster's patterns, so too is he capable of dispensing with that, ostensibly throwing caution to the winds for a spirited, driving, 'Burn Down the Mission', his mysterious voice wailing over the bass and drums of his own trio – Dee Murray and Nigel Olson respectively.

In a milieu such as pop music, where stars dim and burn out almost as quickly as they appear, the John-Taupin team has nor worries. Their material has such universal appeal that much of it will most certainly linger for years to come. Elton John is really only at the start of an enduring career.

BRIAN BLEVINS

Grateful Dead

ALTHOUGH THE band's members and manager John McIntyre were not at all pleased with the first ever British performance by the Grateful Dead at the Holly Wood Music Festival, most of the 30,000 people in the audience were staggered by its impact.

Major cause for the Dead's disenchantment with its own performance was the inadequacy of the amplification equipment and the feedback problems which cut into the building climax of their 2½-hour concert.

The Grateful Dead. Speediest band in the West. Already an institution, a legend built on amazing personalities and music of titanic strength which shouts with joy and celebration. The musical personification of the ideals and values of that whole San Francisco subculture the papers wrote about a few years ago, but never quite managed to kill. With author Ken Kesey and other Merry Pranksters, the subject of Tom Wofe's remarkable book, 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test'.

The Grateful Dead. By several accounts the most musically profound yet emotionally direct band ever to plug in an amplifier. At Holly Wood they may have disappointed themselves, but they certainly didn't disappoint the gathering of 30,000 souls which made the festival the pleasant experience that it was.

Taking a while to warm up, the Dead played a series of tunes – some of them unfamiliar – which revealed certain changes in their musical approach and direction. T eir sound has taken note of the new penetration of rock by the lighter textures of country music. These tunes cast off the density to be heard in most of the Dead's records in favour of suppressed instrumentals and precise three-part vocal harmonies by lead and second guitarists Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir and bass guitarist Phil Lesh.

Garcia at times coaxed the whining sounds of a pedal steel guitar (which he has used in recording with Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and the Jefferson Airplane, and in concert with the Dead's auxiliary band the New Riders of the Purple Sage) from his conventional electric six-string guitar. There was a delightful interplay between Garcia and Weir on 'Big Road Blues' (Sun Will Shine in My Back Door), and to say that Weir plays second guitar is not to denigrate the impact of his formidable but subtle contribution to the Dead's music.

After a half dozen separate tunes, the Grateful Dead weaved their way into that particular alchemy which is their musical trademark – the unbroken, fluid improvisation which extends over an hour in length, blending one tune masterfully with the next, interpolating songs such as Buddy Holly's 'Not Fade Away', and closing ultimately with organist Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan belting out the soulful message of 'Loelight'.

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